

HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE TESTIMONY FOR HB-6616

**AN ACT CONCERNING EXPANSION OF HUSKY HEALTH BENEFITS TO THOSE INELIGIBLE DUE TO
IMMIGRATION STATUS**

(SUPPORT)

February 14, 2023

To Co-Chairs, Rep. Gilchrest, Sen. Lesser and members of the CT General Assembly Human Services Committee, my name is TJ Clarke II, Executive Director of Connecticut Oral Health Initiative, Inc., (COHI). Our mission is to strengthen and safeguard access to quality, affordable oral health services for all Connecticut residents. We desire that all Connecticut residents will have equal opportunity to obtain the services needed to maintain good oral health. COHI is the only statewide organization that solely advocates for equitable oral health policies. Today, we are asking you to support bill **HB 6616**, which would extend access to HUSKY health to all income eligible CT residents under age 26, no matter their immigration status.

Making sure that all residents can access healthcare makes sense - from an economic and health perspective. That's why other bills in previous years to expand HUSKY to immigrants had substantial public support. The past 2 years, this committee held public hearings for the referenced bills had that resulted in over 300 testimonies in support of each bill! This is not a controversial issue for voters. Not acting on this issue would be a choice to look the other way and ignore the sizable support that exists for ensuring immigrants have access to healthcare.

We also need to remember that undocumented immigrants in CT alone pay roughly \$145 million into state and local taxes every year. These taxes fund Connecticut's HUSKY program. Yet, despite their contributions, many immigrant communities cannot access health coverage due to HUSKY's limiting eligibility rules for immigrants.

In closing, we urge the Human Services Committee to support **HB 6616** and equalize health access for all of CT's residents. We believe our great state can have a future that includes healthy families and a stable, thriving, growing workforce that is ready to meet the needs of its present and future residents.

Yours in service,

TJ Clarke II, MBA
Executive Director
Connecticut Oral Health Initiative, Inc.